



**NATIONAL
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
ADVISORY COUNCIL**



February 8, 2001

Administrator Christine Todd Whitman
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Whitman,

Please find attached a copy of the report entitled “*Environmental Justice and Community-Based Health Model Discussion: A Report on the Public Meeting Convened by the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, May 23 - 26, 2000.*”

EPA, through its Office of Environmental Justice, asked the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) to provide advice and recommendations on the following questions:

- (1) What strategies and areas of research¹ should be pursued to achieve more effective, integrated community-based health assessment, intervention, and prevention efforts?
- (2) How should these strategies be developed, implemented and evaluated so as to ensure substantial participation, integration and collaboration among federal agencies, in partnership with: impacted communities; public health, medical and environmental professionals; academic institutions; state, tribal and local governments; and the private sector?
- (3) How can consideration of socioeconomic status and cultural factors: (a) contribute to health disparities and cumulative and disproportionate environmental effects; and (b) be incorporated into community health assessments?

In short, this report reflects the advice and recommendations that resulted from pre-meeting preparation (i.e., interviews) and on-site discussions and public comments. The breath of the discussions were exemplified by individuals and/or organizations that either provided comments, suggestions or recommendations on what EPA could and/or should consider in addressing these health-related issues. As a whole, it sets forth a number of policy recommendations for consideration by EPA and other federal, state and local agencies to consider.

These recommendations are listed under five (5) key recommendations that were identified to be the dominant themes surfaced repeatedly among the stakeholders in both interviews and public

¹Research in this context encompasses a broad range of studies that may include basic science, applied research, and data collection. These may be carried out by: federal, state, tribal or local governments; universities; communities; industry; and/or individuals.

testimony. It is recognized that to accomplish these goals, EPA will need to take the lead and/or work in companion with other federal agencies in a collaborative manner. Consequently, NEJAC recommends that the *Administrator*:

- Promote Better Understanding of “Community-Based Participatory Research Models” - - EPA and other federal agencies need to better understand the approach and usefulness of “community-based participatory research models” and the importance of including prevention and intervention components in these projects.
- Place Greater Emphasis on Translating Current and Future Scientific Knowledge Into Positive Action - - EPA and other federal agencies may fail to act on a problem because of an inability to “prove” a casual relationship. Having said that, greater emphasis needs to be placed on translating current and future scientific knowledge into more positive action at the policy and community level (i.e., what can the government do to help, even though the exact science is not readily available or known).
- Promote More Effective Interagency Collaboration and Cooperation - - EPA and other federal agencies should establish more extensive formal and informal interagency mechanisms to help assure that the necessary expertise and other resources are brought to bear on eliminating health disparities and disproportionate exposures. Part of this process would better define responsibilities and available resources for dealing with specific problems and issues.
- Include Socioeconomic and Cultural Factors in Health Assessments - - EPA and other federal agencies need to examine the impact and significance of socioeconomic and cultural factors on health disparities. Then, as appropriate, include these factors in health assessment, intervention, and prevention strategies.
- Respond to Urgent Needs of Medically Underserved Communities - - EPA and other federal agencies need to further examine the most significant needs of medically underserved communities. The mechanisms established to address these concerns should be brought to bear to eliminate or reduce disparities in health care access and improving environmental health education.

The process for developing this report included the formation of a multi-stakeholder recommendations Working Group that attempted to capture and compile the presentations and discussions that occurred during the NEJAC meeting. Also, attached is a list of the names and affiliations of all those who served on this Working Group.

We are pleased to present this report to you for your review, consideration, response and action.

Sincerely,

Peggy Shepard
Acting, Chair, NEJAC